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ABSTRACT

This document consists of four issues of a newsletter for educators at the elementary level. Each issue focuses on a theme and includes an article on that theme, along with regular columns. The Fall 1997 issue focuses on using writer's clubs to encourage student writing. The news column for this issue discusses HIV in schools, and the vice president's column discusses using community projects that educate and entertain. The Winter 1997 issue's topic is "Safety in the Cybervillage: Some Internet Guidelines for Teachers." The vice president's column addresses ACEI (Association for Childhood Education International) committee updates and future plans. The Spring 1998 newsletter focuses on defining the multiage classroom. A sidebar describes the National Center for Science Literacy, Education and Technology, and the executive director's column describes resources on ACEI's Web site. The Summer 1998 issue, in a continuation of the look at alternative configurations for elementary schools and classrooms, focuses on the issues that surround inclusive classrooms and looping structures in elementary schools. The vice president's column discusses group projects in the classroom. All issues contain listings of new Web resources, and many describe print publications and relevant national awards. (EV)

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Focus on Elementary (Ages 07-10)
A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community
1997-1998

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ACEI

Fall 1997 • Vol. 10, No. 1

Focus on Elementary ages 7-10

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community

"Kids Helping Kids"

The sixth annual UNICEF Greeting Card Contest invites young artists to submit their own visions of the theme, "Kids Helping Kids." The winning drawings will be produced as UNICEF holiday greeting cards and sold exclusively at Pier 1 Import stores during the 1998 holiday season.

Since the creation of UNICEF's Greeting Card program in 1949, over three billion UNICEF greeting cards have been sold, raising more than $500 million. The first "Kids Helping Kids" contest was held in 1992 to help kick off the annual UNICEF holiday card sales drive. This has brought more recognition to the greeting cards, while making children everywhere more aware of global concerns.

Children ages 13 and under are invited to participate in the contest. Entries will be separated into two categories: ages 7and under and ages 8 to 13. Two winners, one from each group, will be selected. In addition to having their artwork produced as 1998's holiday greeting cards, each winner, accompanied by his or her parents, will receive a free trip to New York City in November. While in New York, they will attend a special reception where their work will be exhibited. Each winner will also receive $500 spending money for their trip. Entries will be accepted through October 24, 1997. Entry forms are available at Pier 1 stores (call 800-447-4371 for the store nearest you).

Authors in the Making: An Invitation To Join the Writer's Club

Patricia A. Crawford and Stephen Schroeder, University of Central Florida at Daytona Beach

Slant up, slant down and draw a line,
Slant up, slant down and draw a line,
Slant up, slant down and draw a line,
To make a capital A.

This song, a short ditty sung to the tune of "Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush," is a relic of bygone days. Originally taught to 1st-graders, it was intended to remind young writers about the basics of letter formation. In a world ruled by "rockers" and "rainbows," the song captured a view of the composition process that was governed first by the rules of manuscript formation and then later by the nuances of cursive writing.

Looking back, it seems that the formal writing curriculum had little to do with constructing meaning, sharing knowledge or collaborating with peers. Rather, it had everything to do with sitting quietly and carefully copying script from the board. From time to time, students would have the opportunity to engage in creative writing. Experiences that allowed young writers to develop and refine full pieces of original text, however, were decidedly limited. Educators paid little attention to the actual composition process, and opportunities to develop a genuine sense of what it meant to be an author were more the exception than the rule.

Our understanding of children's writing and the nature of the writing process has changed greatly during the past 20 years. Decades of research on elementary students' writing have revealed something that should have been apparent all

along: If children are going to be successful writers, they need to have ongoing opportunities to write in purposeful, authentic and meaningful ways (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1983; Short, Harste & Burke, 1996). Like all writers, students need to have a sense of ownership over their work. They need to be able to revisit works in process as they rehearse, draft, revise and edit text, en route to creating a final draft (Graves, 1983, 1994). Furthermore, if children are to view themselves as authors and to count themselves among those who write well and often, they need the support of a caring community of learners who will embrace the writer, as well as value the writing (Dudley-Marling, 1997).

These simple principles serve as the foundation for writing workshops, which can be opportunities for students to come together to learn, write and share their work. While the writing workshop has transformed the face of elementary writing curricula, many teachers still struggle in their efforts to create genuine learning communities in which children engage in authentic forms of writing. As one veteran teacher with 12 years of writing workshop experience said:

> I feel like all the right pieces are in place, but it never really comes together. I still always feel as if students write for an audience of one—me. I try to create a genuine writing community, but it always feels forced or contrived. Sometimes I wonder if it's even possible.

This teacher is not alone in her concerns and she raises important questions: Is it possible to create authentic writing communities among elementary students? If so, how do we go about doing this?

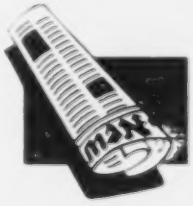
Joining the Writer's Club

Concerns such as these are what led Stephen Schroeder, a teacher education student at the University of Central Florida, to begin a Friday evening writer's club for elementary students. As a prospective teacher, he wanted children to see writing not as a required academic task, but rather as a powerful process that could enrich their lives. As a community leader, he hoped to spark the interest of children within the area. Stephen envisioned a program in which interested participants could come together to celebrate writing. Reasoning that children would want to write if they were given an encouraging and creative context in which to do it, he decided to organize a community-based writer's club that would draw from the local area and operate separately from the school system.

His purpose in starting the

In the News

Schools and students with HIV



Children with HIV are living longer and staying healthier, according to a study published by the American Academy of Pediatrics and conducted by researchers from Massachusetts hospitals and clinics, as well as the Massachusetts Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As a result, schools need to be prepared for a future with more HIV-infected students.

In early 1994 there were an estimated 12,000 HIV-infected U.S. children, of which 40 percent were school-age. In 1993, however, there were more than 1,600 HIV-infected children born. With a life expectancy of over nine years, these children will likely attend school.

Of the 92 children studied, three were too ill to attend school, five were home-schooled and 84 attended school outside the home. Of those in public school, most had few absences. In more than half of the cases, the school had not been informed of the child's condition. The authors suggest that the child's health care professionals help the family decide whether to reveal the child's disease, serve as the child's advocate in the educational system and offer medical guidance to school personnel.

writer's club was three-fold. First, he wanted to create a supportive and low-risk environment in which children's writing could be nurtured. Second, he wanted to establish a forum in which he could be a "writer's influence," a role model who enjoyed writing and valued it as a part of everyday life. And, finally, he wanted to help legitimize writing in the minds of the students with whom he worked. Knowing that children's lives are often influenced by peer pressure and the urgency to engage in a whole range of activities, Stephen hoped to position writing and participation in a thriving, literate community as a viable alternative to other, less healthful, choices.

Foundations

"If you build it they will come." Although this bit of practical wisdom may have worked wonders in *Field of Dreams*, real life is another matter. From the beginning, Stephen recognized that an authentic writing community could not simply be built, and then imposed on the participants. If children were going to participate, they needed to play a role in constructing this community themselves; they needed to have a voice in shaping the community's identity and charting the group's course.

Stephen began to solicit input from the children, gathering information on their thoughts about writing, as well as the kind of things they would like to see happen if a writer's group was formed. Although the majority of the respondents expressed negative attitudes about the writing they did in school, most were open to the possibility of being part of a writing community. While some children expressed vague enthusiasm, others offered concrete suggestions: the activities must be fun; participants should have a chance to do artwork as well as write; and the club should be made an official entity, complete with a special name, membership cards, elected officers, and regular rituals and activities. One child suggested that such a club would need money for supplies, and later returned with an empty soup can labeled simply, "Donations for Writer's Club." Responses such as these served as clear indications that young writers were capable of envisioning and charting a plan of action for the establishment of their own learning community.

Coming Together

Working with the children, Stephen organized a flexible framework for the inception of the writer's

Publications

Submissions for issue by issue

Do you, a friend, a family member or someone in your community have a disability? If so, *Skipping Stones*, a non-profit children's magazine, would like to hear from you. This magazine, which encourages cooperation, creativity and celebration of cultural and linguistic diversity, is preparing its January/February 1998 issue, "Challenging Disability." The editors are interested in the challenges of people with disabilities. Please send your typed or neatly handwritten short stories, interviews, essays, plays (less than 750 words) proverbs or poems (30 lines or less) to *Skipping Stones*, P.O. Box 3939, Eugene, Oregon 97403. Non-English submissions are equally welcome, as are cartoons, drawings, paintings and photo essays with captions. Please include your name, age and address on each page and include a self-addressed stamped envelope. All contributors will receive a copy of the issue.

Skipping Stones also invites submissions for other upcoming issues, which will focus on topics such as cultural celebrations, African, Asian and Latin American cultures, how to raise caring children, living abroad, architecture indigenous to your region, modern technology and its impact on us, hospitality customs of your family/culture and cross-cultural communication.

club. It was decided that the group would meet biweekly and focus on the dual processes of writing and illustration. Participants would come together to work towards the goals of writing, refining and publishing their work. Meetings would include time for text development, as well as social interaction.

Six children, whose ages spanned the elementary grades, met in a neighborhood home for the initial gathering. The meeting began with the lighting of a "writing candle" and a brief discussion on the ways in which fire might symbolize writing. A "talking stick," borrowed from Indian tradition, was used; each child added their thoughts as the stick was passed from person to person. Together, they named themselves the Crane Writer's Club (not only are cranes native to the area, the Red Crowned Crane is a symbol of "spirit" in Japan). The club received its official start as the members placed their "hands together in agreement and formed a fellowship of writers" (Schroeder, 1997).

In the weeks that followed, the participants brainstormed ideas, read children's books and explored different modes of illustration. But most of all, they wrote. And they have been writing ever since. Some children have been eager and prolific authors, engaging easily and joyfully in the writing act. Others have needed a great deal of support simply to get past the obstacle of putting pencil to paper. Yet, all have been active members of the writing community, persevering in their writing until a piece was ready for publication.

At a recent publication party, the children's final products were rich and varied. Some were short, others quite lengthy. Some pieces highlighted the written text, while others emphasized the visual aspects of publication, with much attention given to illustration. All of the final publications represented the work of engaged and active authors who took a great deal of pride in their work.

Making Strides

The Crane Writer's Club has been up and running for a full year. The group currently meets for three hours on Friday evenings. The first two hours are devoted to writing, illustrating and exploring different types of book design. The final hour is designated as a social time in which the children play orga-

Resources

Websites for educators

www.education-world.com
This website from Education World features a unique search engine with more than 50,000 links to education-related sites. It also offers lesson plans, curriculum materials, discussion forums and monthly reviews of other education websites.

www.GreatKids.com
Access this site to learn about children who are making a difference in their communities. The site also invites visitors to submit stories about children in their own areas whose positive contributions should be celebrated.

www.bookitprogram.com
This site by Book It!®, a reading incentive program, offers on-line access to the annotated bibliography of the program's optional 1997-98 theme, global diversity. Visitors will be able to link to conservation organizations and agencies for information and ideas to enhance their program.

www.askasia.org
This website from the Asia Society offers classroom-tested resources and cultural information, games and activities, and links to relevant people, places and institutions.

www.nga.gov
The National Gallery of Art's site features over 3,200 full-view digital images and 3,800 details of art from its collection. It also includes tours of the museum and historical audio segments.

www.4teachers.org
This site "for teachers powering learning with technology" offers teachers' stories of technology in the classroom, web lessons for students and more.

www.eduplace.com
Houghton Mifflin's website offers on-line reading-related resources for teachers, students and parents. Also includes "The Reading Dimension," an on-line book club for kids.

nized games and have the opportunity to interact informally.

Members hail from a wide range of socioeconomic groups and represent a variety of cultural backgrounds. Approximately 75 percent of the participants are boys. Since the club's inception, membership has quadrupled, with new members joining at natural breaks in the club's schedule of projects and activities. Currently, a number of local children are waiting for their opportunity to join. This growth in membership necessitated a recent move out of family homes and into the local Boys and Girls Club building, which consequently engendered a whole new wave of interest.

In one short year, the Crane Writer's Club has blossomed into a genuine writing community, a place where elementary students voluntarily, eagerly participate in a full range of writing activities. The club provides young writers a forum where they can take control of their own learning, collaborate with their peers, present their work to an audience and develop leadership abilities.

Though still operated autonomously under Stephen Schroeder's leadership, the club is also a point of collaboration for children, parents, community leaders and university faculty. Although Stephen has coordinated and led all of the group's activities to date, plans are now underway to involve local high

Education's unsung heroes awards

Applications for Northern Life's 1998 Education's Unsung Heroes Awards are now being accepted. The program was originally founded to recognize educators for their innovative spirit and ability to positively influence the children they teach. Full-time kindergarten through grade 12 education professionals, including teachers, principals, classified staff and paraprofessionals, are eligible to participate.

"This program is our way of recognizing educators who have the vision to try new methods of improving student learning," says Mike Dubes, president and CEO of Seattle-based Northern Life. "The qualilty of applicants and the wide range of projects reinforce that there are many unsung heroes in the education field [who] should be recognized and rewarded."

At least 80 winners will be awarded $2,000 each to further their project within their school or district. Each applicant will be judged on the project description, student benefits and use of funds for the project. Of the 80 finalists, three top winners will collect additional prizes of $25,000, $10,000 and $5,000. The top three will be selected by Northern Life's Educators Advisory Board, based on the ability of the program to be replicated in other classrooms or benefit an entire school or district.

Educators can nominate themselves or be nominated by their peers, students, parents or the public. Applications must be postmarked by November 1, 1997. Nominees will complete an application and compose three 250-word responses to address the project description, student benefits and use of funds for the project. Applications may be downloaded from Northern Life's website (www.unsungheroes.com) or requested by mailing or faxing a letter, along with the nominee's name and address, to:

Northern Life's Education's
Unsung Heroes Awards Program
c/o CSEA
1505 Riverview Road
P.O. Box 297
St. Peter, MN 56082
Fax: 507-931-2103

school and university students as mentors and writing coaches for the group. Parent volunteers participate by providing snacks, donating supplies and helping with logistics. Publication nights are open to families, friends and interested others. Just as the club is becoming a community unto itself, it is also becoming an important fiber in the tapestry of the broader local community.

The Big Picture

Is it possible to create authentic writing communities among elementary students? The Crane Writer's Club project would indicate that the answer is an unequivocal "yes." Children not only are able to engage in authentic writing experiences and participate fully in writing communities, they also are capable of shaping these communities and developing a shared vision for influencing their social worlds (Dudley-Marling, 1997; Dyson, 1993; Shannon, 1995). After all, authentic learning communities are more than a group of students who happen to be engaged in the same activity. A genuine community is, as Sharon Murphy states, "the beginning of a shared focus, a shared purpose which eventually leads to a shared way of making sense of some aspect of the world" (Murphy, cited in Dudley-Marling, 1997, p. 3).

Certainly, logistical differences exist between mandatory classroom writing programs and after-school voluntary writing clubs. It seems that the potential exists, however, to find a good deal of common ground between the two. Quality writing programs, no matter where they are based, share a number of key elements. First, they are contextually appropriate. That is, they are programs that have been developed with a particular group of writers and their social context in mind. Second, they evolve. The program's structure is flexible enough that it can be adapted easily to meet the participants' needs, rather than requiring the participants to adapt to meet the needs of a static program. Finally, they are holistic. The programs are structured in such a way that writers have the opportunity to take part in the whole authoring process, with all its varied components. In the words of Nigel Hall, "If it is the experience of authorship which helps authors develop, then it follows that children should, from the start, be given opportunities to explore what it means to be an author" (Hall, 1989, p. ix).

Where better to experience this than within the supportive framework of a writing community? It all starts with an invitation to join the writer's club.

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Lesson Plans

October is national UNICEF month

The fourth annual National UNICEF Month Campaign will kick off in October. To help support UNICEF's work with children in need around the world, children in the U.S. will "Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF." In addition to collecting spare change on October 31, children can participate in classroom activities designed to help them gain a global understanding of the daily challenges encountered by children in the developing world. Free educational materials (in English and Spanish) are available from the U.S. Committee for UNICEF to help teachers plan lessons appropriate for grades 1 through 12. To receive the free materials, call 800-FOR-KIDS, or download them from the U.S. Committee for UNICEF homepage at www.unicefusa.org.

community projects that educate and entertain

Last spring was a very busy time for me. In late May, after the ACEI Annual Conference in Portland, four of my students and I joined nine other teams from around the U.S. in the finals of the Bayer Corporation, *Discover Magazine*, Christopher Columbus Foundation and National Science Foundation "Community Innovation" competition, judged at EPCOT Center at Walt Disney World in Florida. I would like to share this project and pique your interest in participating for the 1997-98 academic year.

This 6th- through 8th-grade competition challenged students to use science, technology and engineering to invent solutions that would improve the quality of life in their communities. Teams of four students must apply the scientific method to solve real-world problems. This contest enhances participants' curiosity, resourcefulness, and creative and critical thinking skills.

Last October, I shared the application with my 5th- and 6th-grade class. While most of the students were new to my multi-age classroom, four students were starting their third year with me. Those veterans wanted a project to take ownership in and began meeting after school with me and several parents. They identified many neighborhood concerns and settled on drivers running red lights.

They gathered 24 hours worth of data, and met with neighborhood activists, traffic engineers and their city council representative. The students understood the severity of the problem as they stood on the corners counting the drivers who ran red lights. They took data three different times during the day and at two intersections.

The students then contacted the Director of Transportation with the Department of Public Works. They began recording the license plate numbers and then faxing these numbers to the director's office. He then sent violators friendly letters calling to their attention that they had run a red light.

The next step was to test a temporary solution. The students worked in pairs, one standing halfway up the block dressed in a brightly colored safety patrol poncho holding a large, orange sign that read, "STOP AHEAD." The other student stood at the corner collecting data. While that cut violations, they knew it was not a permanent solution. They persuaded the Director of Transportation to put up two stoplight warning signs. Yet the drivers continued to run red lights. Although the signs were the students' original solution, the director helped them to think about a higher tech solution. The team learned about an automatic "photocop" that could be tied to the traffic lights and sensors in the crosswalks that take pictures of cars running red lights.

A local television crew interviewed the students for the 6 p.m. news and followed their progress throughout the competition. The students also worked with high school students to edit a five-minute videotape and completed a nine-page entry form.

In early April, they received word that they had made it to the semifinals. Our regional coordinator invited all the midwest teams to prepare a presentation for each other and family members at the Science Museum of Minnesota. This gave the students experience in speaking to the public.

Later that month, the students heard that they were in the finals. They received $250 to prepare a three-dimensional display for the competition, prepare a looped television clip, and create an interactive computer survey to gather public data while at EPCOT.

The six days at Walt Disney World were exciting. Students:

- displayed and presented their solution to the public for two days
- competed for a $25,000 community grant and individual savings bonds
- participated in the *Discover Magazine* Awards for Technological Innovation and met with adult winners
- visited the various theme parks to gather data on the physics of various rides, take behind-the-scenes tours and enjoy the rides
- met motivational speaker Chad Foster, who told them to remember that as they pursue their dreams, other doors will open.

What sets this apart from other competitions? There are several reasons to pursue this competition:

- It appeals to all students, not just the brightest.
- The prizes are substantial, substantive and invest in the community. A special $25,000 grant will help a team and the community work together to bring the idea to life.
- The competition gives students a rich experience in the scientific process and an opportunity to excel. A regional coordinator is available to help teams network with experts in whatever field will be most helpful.
- This is truly community-focused. The entries focus on inquiry-based problems that emerge from the students' own communities.
- Creativity and resourcefulness is emphasized.
- The competition is open to all youth of middle-school age.
- There is no fee for entry. In fact, if a team makes it to the finals, it receives money to develop the entry. This helps to level the playing field.

For more information, contact Stephanie Haliman at 800-291-6020; success@edumedia.com. Check out the website at www.nst.gov/bayer-nst-award.htm to access last year's winning entries. We did not win, but we had a lot of fun! Register your students right away and begin challenging kids to apply their cranial matter to a community matter.

—M.J. Savaiano, Vice President Representing Later Childhood/Early Adolescence

Focus on Elementary

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Focus on Elementary ages 7-10

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community

ThinkQuest® Junior

Advanced Network & Services has announced an all-new Internet competition for students in grades 4 through 6, *ThinkQuest Junior*. Inspired by the success of the original *ThinkQuest*, for students ages 12 to 19, *ThinkQuest Junior* will award students for using the Internet to create Web-based educational materials that make learning fun.

Since 1996, more than 10,000 students and teachers from 40 countries have participated in the original *ThinkQuest*, which awards more than $1 million annually in the form of scholarships for students and cash for their teachers and schools. Winners have helped other students learn to invest in the stock market with virtual funds, design an environmentally safe town, learn the programming language C++, participate in a court for teens by teens and learn history by exploring U.S. postal stamps that celebrate Black heritage. Now, younger students will be eligible to compete for their own awards. Details about *ThinkQuest Junior* and entry examples are available on the contest's Web site (www.advanced.org/thinkquest).

Advanced Network & Services, Inc., a not-for-profit organization, is dedicated to advancing education by accelerating the use of computer network applications and technology in education. *ThinkQuest* is one of the programs it has developed to help carry out that purpose.

Safety in the Cybervillage: Some Internet Guidelines for Teachers

Larry L. Burriss
Middle Tennessee State University

Recent stories given great play in newspapers and in radio and television programs emphasize the dangers the Internet may pose to children. We have seen stories of suicides, kidnappings and abuse that have occurred after children have accessed E-mail, chat rooms and Web sites.

Just how frightened should teachers and parents be, and is there anything that can be done to prevent children from becoming victims of those who lurk in the dark corners of the Cybervillage? The problem here is actually twofold: there is both a lack of basic knowledge about the equipment (i.e., computers), and a lack of knowledge about the Internet.

Although computers have been in the classroom for at least 15 years, many teachers are not comfortable using this technology. In addition, some schools do not provide the technical support teachers need in order to use these valuable resources.

Using a computer is not all that difficult. Yes, it requires learning some new words. Yes, it takes some time to read the instructions and then follow them. Yes, it is embarrassing when you have to ask a 9-year-old how to start the machine. Unfortunately, however, too many teachers confuse knowing HOW the machine works with knowing WHY it works. By way of analogy, most people have no idea why their family car works—what the oil really does or what actually happens when they press on the brake pedal. Yet they are quite comfortable driving a car. Using a computer is similar. If you can find the on/off switch, use a keyboard and push a mouse around, you can use a computer. It is that simple.

Teachers also are uninformed about the Internet itself. Many educators now are comfortable using a word processor, a spreadsheet program and maybe a few games. The Internet, however,

seems to be a baffling array of addresses and sites, sounds and sights, information and cites. But again, it is a matter of spending some time getting acquainted with HOW to use the system, not necessarily learning WHY it works the way it does. Consequently, the first step towards cyber safety is to sit down, preferably with your students, and learn about the Internet.

Look at it this way: Suppose a child came to you and said, "I was down on Maple Street, going by that old blue house, and a stranger asked me to come inside to watch some television." And suppose you do not know where Maple Street is. Would you be too embarrassed to ask the child for directions? Of course not! Well, the Internet is the same way. If you do not know your way around, then ask. A little embarrassment now could save a lot of grief later.

What can you do, then, to make sure the kids in your classroom are safe? For starters, teach children that the information superhighway is just like any other public street—you are going to meet some very nice people, but then you may run into some who are not so nice. Just like a public street, you have to be careful when you venture onto it.

Lesson one: Most children have been trained not to talk to strangers. The Internet may seem different, however, and children may be lured into a false sense of security when the new "friend" on the Internet sounds just like the little friend next door. The Cyber-aware teacher will emphasize that students should not give names, addresses or phone numbers to strangers, either on the streets or on the Internet. Also, there is no need for children to tell Cyber-friends where they go to school or what they look like.

Other safety tips teachers can pass on to parents and students also involve plain common sense. What, for example, do parents do when little (or, perhaps, not-so-little) Susie or Johnny wants to visit a friend a couple of blocks away? The parent goes with the child for the first couple of visits. They talk with the parents. They see what the home life is like.

Just the same, when a child meets a new friend on the Internet, and the conversation goes beyond mere pleasantries, teachers should suggest that parents ask to "speak" with the parents on the "other end."

The following

contain

information for

and

:

Although there are tens of thousands of

, the following basic list will get you :

American Library Association
http://www.ssdesign.com/parentspage/greatsites/
Links to materials for both teachers and students. Includes "50 Great Sites for Parents and Kids."

The Direct Marketing Association
http://www.the-dma.org/consass5/consasst-parents5b.shtml
Site has general information about the Internet, the World Wide Web and suggestions for keeping children safe in the Cybervillage.

KidPub
http://www.kidpub.org/kidpub/
Thousands of short stories written by kids of all ages. Schools also can participate.

U.S. Department of Education
http://inet.ed.gov/
Education resources from the federal government.

Yahoo
http://www.yahoo.com/Education/
This site has links to thousands of resources for teachers at all grade levels and for any imaginable subject. Look here first for resources.

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It may help to know that teachers do not need to do all of this alone. Recently, the Direct Marketing Association launched *Get CyberSavvy! The DMA's Guide to Parenting Skills for the Digital Age: Online Basics, Behavior and Privacy.* This 24-page guide offers a number of activities so that both teachers and children can learn their way around the Internet and set up rules to follow when visiting on-line sites.

Single copies of *Get CyberSavvy!* are available free of charge by writing Consumer Services, The Direct Marketing Association, 1111 19th Street, NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20036-3606. The activities are also available at the DMA Web site (http://www.the-dma.org/pan7/parents-cybrsvvy7b1.shtml).

One of the benefits of the *CyberSavvy* program is that it allows teachers and students to set out explicit rules for on-line behavior. The following question-and-answer excerpt is typical:

> "If I receive any E-mail messages that are scary, I will:
> • Tell a parent, teacher or other trusted adult immediately.
> • Not respond to the message without my parent's or teacher's permission.
> • Report the incident to my on-line or Internet service provider, or call the police if I feel threatened.
> • Another choice: (type in your own choice)."

These rules can be made part of a contract between the student, the school and the parents that could also include a users' code of ethics (Frazier, 1995).

Another source of good information for and about children is the American Library Association. The ALA has an extensive site that not only includes safety tips, but also information about 50 "kid-friendly" locations that are educational, as well as just plain fun. The ALA on-line address is http://www.ala.org/parentspage. The mailing address for a printed list of the 50 sites for kids is: ALA Public Information Office, Dept. P, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611.

One topic that always comes up in discussions of children on the Internet is obscenity and pornography. Just like in "real life" (as opposed to "virtual life"), it is important to get the facts. Yes, there are Web sites and news groups that are not fit for human consumption. I am not talking about art sites that show the unclothed people painted on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, sculpture sites that show Michelangelo's statue of David, or detailed medical sites. Rather, I am talking about the raw, sex-oriented sites that make headlines and conjure

Publications

Does my child have a speech problem?

According to the American Speech and Hearing Association, one in every six children has a communication disorder. Yet it is not always clear to parents and educators exactly what a child's problem is and how they should respond to it.

As a certified speech pathologist, Katherine L. Martin encountered hundreds of parents and educators who had questions and concerns about a child's speech and language skills. In an effort to provide answers to their questions, she wrote the book *Does My Child Have a Speech Problem?* (Chicago Review Press). In her book, Martin reveals:

- The 50 most commonly asked questions by parents and educators
- Why children get misdiagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder when they actually have auditory processing difficulties, and how to prevent a misdiagnosis
- Strategies that can be applied in the home and classroom to help cope with language difficulties once they are diagnosed
- Information and guidelines about normal language development
- Behaviors that can signal a problem; when to get professional help
- Suggestions for enhancing listening skills and language development in every child.

Does My Child Have a Speech Problem? is available in bookstores or through Independent Publishers Group (814 N. Franklin St., Chicago, IL 60610; 800-888-4741)

up images of perverts and child abusers lurking behind every keystroke. You name the activity, and there is probably a site that discusses it, shows it and encourages it.

So what can you do to keep your students away from such sites? The only thing you can do is take some time to work with your children and make sure you know what they are doing, and how they are doing it.

Let us go back to the everyday world again. The local multiplex cinema is showing 12 films, ranging from *Bambi* to the latest "hack-'n-slash" thriller, and your class is going to visit the mall as part of a field trip. Do you allow 6-year-olds to roam unattended in the mall? What about a 10-year-old or a 15-year-old? Quite simply, if you would not allow a 6-year-old to visit the mall unescorted, do not turn her loose on the Internet. It is that simple.

What if a you find a couple of 10-year-old boys in your class using the Yahoo search engine to look for the word "Maidenform"? First of all, they are going to find some 300 sites dealing with warehouse management, the Advertising Education Foundation, "The Completely Unofficial Mystery Science Theater 3000" References Guide, dozens of outlet stores and malls, and, oh yes, lingerie. Are they going to see anything more risqué than the full-color newspaper ads for department stores he and his friends snicker over, or the 10-foot-tall posters very publicly displayed in the windows of Victoria's Secret? Probably not.

At what point, then, does access to Internet sites become a problem? First, there are developmental differences between the child and his friends sneaking a quick peek at a lingerie home page, versus spending hours looking up Bali (which, by the way, yields several hundred sites related to the island, and one site featuring batik), versus finding hard-core pornography. Each teacher will have to regard these access questions differently (with an understanding of each child), but if the child is spending hours and hours doing anything to the exclusion of everything else, there may be problems.

At any rate, the well-prepared teacher will find a way to appropriately discuss these subjects when they present themselves. The key here is the venerable rule, "Don't react, respond." The teacher should use these "incidents" as learning

Resources

Web sites for educators & students

http://bookbuzz.com
The Women's National Book Association (WNBA) is celebrating its 80th anniversary by creating a book list of 80 books for girls from toddler to teens. Visit this site for a copy of the book list, as well as information about the celebration's activities.

http://users.aol.com/holubj/pp.html
The Kids Pen Pals Web site lists children's books about pen pals for students in grades 1-3, plus links to many other Web sites about pen pals for kids and schools.

http://users.aol.com/a100thday/index.html
This site for kids and teachers contains 100 ideas to celebrate the 100th day of school, links to other sites, and a list of books to use in classrooms to help celebrate. In addition, students can ask questions of Joan Holub, the author of the book *The 100th Day of School*.

www.ebig.com
The Britannica Internet Guide provides users with an efficient and authoritative Internet navigation service. By offering access to quality Web sites that contain valuable information, the Guide provides the tools to find what you are looking for on the Web.

www.teachersatrandom.com
This resource from Random House Children's Publishing provides K-4 teachers with materials to enhance the classroom experience for young readers. Features include teachers' and readers' guides; The Teachers' Lounge, full of tips from other teachers; special offers and a Classroom Club, which offers free displays and chances to win prizes for your classroom.

www.sandiegozoo.org
This site from the Zoological Society of San Diego lets children take a virtual trip to the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park and includes several games.

opportunities for the students rather than react negatively. These episodes could be used to discuss male/female differences, clothing, culture, health and history.

The safety rules call for more direct monitoring of younger children than older students. A class of elementary students on a trip to the museum may freely explore the halls, but the teacher will want the children to check in with them every hour or so. Likewise, on the Internet, perhaps teachers in the classroom need to check in with their children to see the sites they are visiting.

Fortunately, both Internet Explorer from Microsoft, and NetScape Navigator provide "history" files that allow the teacher to "reaccess" sites that the user has visited. Again, teachers will have to learn how to use these files, and understand that if a child is accessing the Web, and there is nothing in the history files, then the student is deleting the site references. The question, and a rather serious one, then is "why is the child deleting the site locations?" As with all education, the goal is to provide meaningful guided experiences, while at the same time, allowing an increasing degree of autonomy.

A practical solution to monitoring children's behavior on the Internet may be something as simple as making sure the monitors face into the room so the teacher can always see what is on the

A national plastics reuse it contest

The American Plastics Council (APC) invites environmentally conscious students and teachers to submit their imaginative and practical reuse ideas for the second annual National Plastics Reuse It Contest. Students and teachers can participate as a class in the following categories: elementary school (9 years and younger), junior high school (10-13 years), high school (14-18 years) and college (18 years). The winner of each category will receive $1,000.

According to Susan Moore, vice president of communications for APC, "Whether it is an empty soft drink bottle, a plastic grocery bag or the plastic rings from a six-pack, just about every plastic product can be reused for other purposes. We found in a recent telephone survey that more than 80 percent of Americans reused a plastic product within the last six months. Our contest challenges consumers to think of creative ways to get the most use out of a single plastic item."

Last year, judges saw more than 1,000 entries and over 10,000 reuse ideas. Some of these ideas included plastic tabs from bread being reused as hair ribbon organizers, pizza cutter protectors made from plastic coffee can lids and Halloween costumes made from plastic bubble wrap.

To enter the National Plastics Reuse It Contest, teachers and students may obtain an entry form and contest rules by calling 800-777-9500, or by visiting the APC Web site at www.plasticsresource.com. Entries must be postmarked by February 1, 1998. There is a limit of one entry per person or class. Winners will be chosen by April 30, 1998.

The American Plastics Council is the major trade association representing the United States plastics industry on resource conservation issues.

screen. Again, teachers need to look at the computer, and computer access, as being very much like television or public streets—you need to keep track of what is going on.

Summary

Despite some admittedly negative aspects of living in the Cybervillage, teachers can do some very positive things to make sure children are using this vast resource to its fullest potential. All they need to do is take some time to learn how the Internet works, and what is out there. Plus, there are vast differences in both learning and presentation between the traditional classroom experience and the Internet experience (Natale, 1995; Peterson & Facemyer, 1996).

Sure, there are a lot of games and silly locations to distract your students. But there is also an abundance of educational material that will provide relevant experiences for both teachers and students (Lindroth, 1996). For example, every major news organization has a site on the Web. These locations provide not only news, but also links to other interesting and educational sites. If, for example, you want to find more information about the sun for a science project, you could follow various links that start with coverage of the Mars landing or the troubles aboard the Mir space station. Links from news stories about tobacco will lead you to authoritative information in the fields of biology, medicine and health.

The Internet has sometimes been compared to McLuhan's global village. As with every other village and town, there are gong to be some areas that present danger. With a little common sense and time, however, you can help protect your children and, at the same time, find lots of worthwhile places to visit.

Larry L. Burriss is Professor of Journalism at Middle Tennessee State University. He teaches courses in database research and has developed on-line courses in media law. Burriss has written and spoken extensively on Internet-related issues. He can be reached through his homepage at http://www.mtsu.edu/~lburriss, or via E-mail at lburriss@a1.mtsu.edu

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The American Library Association's Five Basic Internet Safety Rules for Children:

1. *Never give your name, address, phone number or school name to anyone you meet on-line.*
2. *Never go into a new on-line area that will cost extra without asking your parents' permission.*
3. *Never give out a credit card number on-line.*
4. *Never arrange to meet in person with someone you have met on-line unless you discuss it with your parents and an adult goes with you to a very public place.*
5. *Always tell your parents or other adult you trust if you see something on-line that is scary or that you do not understand.*

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committee updates and future plans

At the 1997 ACEI Annual Conference in Portland, the Later Childhood / Early Adolescence Committee met to discuss action plans for the year. We decided upon our luncheon speaker for the 1998 conference and have chosen a special committee project, which we believe will be relevant to those of us who work with older students.

We are honored to have Nancy N. Crews, from Middle Tennessee State University, as our luncheon speaker. The title of her presentation is "Planning, Developing and Implementing a Young Author's Conference: Celebrating Children's Reading and Writing." She will guide us through the the various phases of planning an author's conference, getting parents involved and celebrating children's success. Do plan to attend this very practical and easy-to-replicate workshop.

The major committee project under development this year will be either a resource guide, a reference handbook or possibly a Web page

linked to the ACEI Home Page (http://www.udel.edu/bateman/acei). We are planning to have input from parents, teachers and others who work with middle school students for this resource, which we hope will ultimately benefit children worldwide. As your Vice President, and on behalf of the committee, I encourage your support for this effort. We are looking for annotated resources for the following areas:

- appropriate Web sites for students as well as educators
- multimedia software, including CD-ROMs
- contests for students, especially in service learning
- publication opportunities
- listservs and discussion groups
- fine arts and multicultural opportunities
- contemporary multicultural books
- tips and resources for parents
- television programs
- clubs and specialty camps
- exceptional supplementary curricula

The following ACEI members volunteered to look for middle school resources:

Jov Avelino-Caluag
Jeanie Burnett
Nancy Crews
Margaret Donaldson
Patricia Ann Goodnight
Gloria Hearn
Mary Larson
Mary McKnight-Taylor
Rita Newman
Janet Moss
Charlene Olliff
Jean Shifferns
Sharon White-Williams
Nancy Yost

Bernard Casarone from ERIC is interested in our project as well. I invite YOU to become involved with this committee work by sharing your expertise with us on the above topics, or by suggesting other possibilities.

Please send your input to me by March 1, 1998, via E-mail (savaiano@Informns.k12.mn.us) and I will compile the results and share them when we meet in Tampa for the 1998 ACEI Conference the week of April 13th. If E-mail is not convenient, please send your information to my home address: 1601 Colorado Avenue South, St. Louis Park, MN 55416-1411.

—M. J. Savaiano,
Vice President Representing Later Childhood/
Early Adolescence

Call for Manuscripts

The readership of *Focus on Elementary* is encouraged to submit ideas and manuscripts related to the education and development of children ages 7 to 10. Editorial assistance is available if needed.

If you have any materials or suggestions to be considered, please contact either Patricia Crawford, University of Central Florida, Box 2811, Daytona Beach, FL 32120 or Kathleen P. Glascott, 1603 Maymont Drive, Murfreesboro, TN 37130.

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Focus on Elementary ages 7-10

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A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community

National Center for Science Literacy, Education and Technology

The American Museum of Natural History has launched its National Center for Science Literacy, Education and Technology. The Center was established with a Congressional designation and appropriation of $8 million from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) under an agreement between NASA and the Museum.

The Center uses new technology and media to connect people to scientists, scientific discoveries and scientific phenomena. The Center will lead an effort to take the Museum's vast resources—32 million specimens and artifacts, 43 exhibition halls, over 200 scientists and 128 years of educational programming—directly to classrooms, libraries, and community centers.

The Center's projects are developed by scientific and educational experts from various disciplines. The projects make use of an array of media, including the World Wide Web, television, video, software, radio and print materials. All programs and materials intended for classroom use include an integrated teacher-education element, and are consistent with the new national science curriculum standards.

The major programs include the Educational Materials Laboratory, which brings science into the classroom and homes, and "Pulse of the Planet," a daily radio program that connects listeners with the cycles of our natural realm.

Defining the Multiage Classroom

Sandra J. Stone
Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff

Many schools throughout the United States are beginning to use multiage classrooms. Multiage educators are finding, however, that while some schools purport to be establishing multiage classrooms, they are not really doing so. Often, a mixed-age grouping is the only defining part of such a classroom, with the rest of the multiage philosophy left out of the design. These classrooms are merely "combination" classrooms, resembling classrooms of the past rather than the multiage classroom of today. Usually these combination classes are the result of a school not having enough children to fill two grade levels. Unfortunately, the term "multiage" is frequently tagged onto these combination classes because it is the new fashion in education terminology. Yet, it is very important to distinguish between the combination class and the multiage class, because they embrace two different education philosophies.

Typically, the two grades are taught separately in the combination classroom. In a 1st- and 2nd-grade combination class, for example, the 1st-graders and 2nd-graders have separate prescribed curricula. The teacher tries to provide for the two groups in the best way possible. He meets with the 1st-graders, teaching them their reading or math concepts, and then does the same with the 2nd-graders. It is a difficult set-up, but somewhat manageable.

The mixed-age grouping, by definition, is created deliberately for the *benefit* of the children, not as a way to balance class sizes. A simple definition of the multiage classroom is a mixed-age

group of children who stay with the same teacher for several years. Such a group is formed to "optimize what can be learned when children of different—as well as the same—ages and abilities have opportunities to interact" (Katz, Evangelou & Allison Hartman, 1990, p. 1). Multiage classrooms often have an age span of three years, rather than two, providing greater opportunities for cross-age learning (Stone & Christie, 1996).

Learning is structured over several years with the same teacher, so that the children can enjoy continuous progress and success. The teacher is able to see children as individuals progressing on their own continuum of learning, and to use appropriate instructional strategies and assessments to accommodate each child's needs.

Retention and promotion are not components of multiage classrooms because their designers view learning as a developmental process. Teachers use process teaching strategies, rather than a prescribed curriculum. Multiage teachers know that a prescribed curriculum usually does not meet the needs of all the children. With no grade-level expectations, each child is individually supported to make successful progress on his own continuum of learning. Learning opportunities are challenging, but appropriate.

With no grade-level expectations, each child is individually supported to make successful progress on his own continuum of learning.

Instruction is not separated by age or grade; rather, children become a family of learners who benefit from collaboration. Mixed-age classrooms provide natural social learning environments that support rich cross-age learning. Cognitively, both younger and older children benefit from having to resolve conflicting points of view. Younger children gain new understandings and older children solidify their mastery of skills (Brown & Palincsar, 1986; Piaget, 1976; Roopnarine & Johnson, 1984; Trudge & Caruso, 1988). The age differences also lead mixed-age children to engage in more prosocial behaviors, such as helping, sharing and taking turns (Katz, Evangelou & Allison Hartman, 1990).

In looking at the multiage classroom's environment, curriculum and assessment, one can see that its structure is based on what we know about children and how they learn. First, the environment is carefully planned in order to take advantage of experiential and mixed-age learning opportunities. Learning tables and centers are used instead of individual desks. Centers are designed to be open-ended, so that all children can come into the experiences at their own level of understanding and skill. The centers allow children choice and opportunities for both autonomous and cooperative learning (Stone, 1996).

Second, the multiage curriculum reflects a child-centered, rather than a curriculum-centered, approach. It is a common misconception that multiage teachers choose a middle-of-the-road curriculum in order to manage the curriculum. It would be inappropriate, however, for a multiage teacher of grades 1, 2 and 3 to choose a

2nd-grade curriculum. Parents would worry, and rightly so, that older children would not be challenged enough and that the younger children would be

frustrated by material that is too difficult. In a true multiage classroom, the teacher presents appropriate skills within the meaningful context of process learning. Children learn to read as they read, write as they write, and problem solve as they solve real problems. Each child enters the process at precisely his or her own learning rate and level. In addition, multiage teachers open up the curriculum for *all* children, exposing them to much more material than they would enjoy in a same-grade classroom. As Brouchard (1991) notes, children "can 'plug into' the curriculum at the appropriate level and yet be exposed to opportunities for review as well as for acceleration" (p. 30).

The teacher uses whole group strategies, such as shared reading, modeled writing, writers' workshops, and discovery science. He or she also uses small group strategies, such as guided math or reading based on the needs of the children, not on their age or grade. In addition, the children learn

from each other by working at centers or on projects.

Assessment in the multiage classroom is also conducted deliberately for the children's benefit. Graded report cards that label, rank and sort children are not necessary. Instead, multiage teachers use portfolios. Such authentic assessment allows multiage teachers to document each child's growth and development within the process and contexts of their actual learning. The knowledge the teacher gains from the assessments is then used to guide and support appropriate instruction for the child. Children are evaluated on their own achievements and potential (Anderson & Pavan, 1993), rather than in comparison to norms or grade-level expectations. Each child in the multiage setting is able to enjoy success through portfolio assessment.

We often find that combination classes are created simply to manage children's behavior in order to accommodate uneven numbers of children among different grades, and to get the children through the graded curriculum. The true multiage classroom takes down the barriers of "gradedness" and seeks something different—it seeks to truly benefit children by fitting the school to their needs, instead of trying to fit the children to the school.

Children learn to read as they read, write as they write, and problem solve as they solve real problems.

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Multiage Classrooms Sound Great . . . Where Do We Start?

Pat Wall and Emilie Rodger
Northern Arizona University,
Center for Excellence in Education, Flagstaff

As interest in multiage classrooms continues to expand and teachers and administrators begin to look seriously at the possibilities of incorporating multiage programs, it is helpful to consider guidelines that can facilitate a smooth transition to multiage classrooms. Most teachers and administrators want a clear picture of the "how-to's" even as they address the "why's" of multiage classrooms. The following guidelines should benefit teachers and administrators who are in the process of beginning multiage programs.

1. Create a team of supportive peers.
First, it is necessary to form a group of colleagues who, while diverse, are mutually interested in the multiage philosophy. The group dialogue should be supportive, yet flexible, and include input from as many interested and curious faculty as possible (music, art, physical education, speech specialists, etc.). Many groups find it helpful to discuss issues concerning the learning environment: mixed aged groupings, two- to three-year blocks of time with the same teacher, the sense of community in an interactive atmosphere, and assessment strategies based on individual, rather than group, performance. The group will meet regularly to discuss ideas, question rationales, explore applications of a multiage program within the school community and ultimately support each other's professional choices.

2. Do your own research.
All participants must do their "homework" on multiage classrooms prior to suggesting a change. Change often is viewed as cyclical, invalid, threatening or impulsive if it is not researched and presented in a thoughtful, prepared manner. Our suggestions for research include:

- read current literature about appropriate learning environments, multiple intelligences,

Multiage Resource Centers

National Multiage Institute (Northern Arizona University, Center for Excellence in Education, P.O. Box 5774, Flagstaff, AZ 86011-5774, 520-523-4280; E-mail: sandra.stone@nau.edu), an international professional development center for multiage educators, directed by Sandra J. Stone, that provides graduate courses in multiage education, conferences and general information.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education (University of Illinois, 51 Gerty Dr., Champaign, IL 61820, 800-583-4135), a federally funded clearinghouse, directed by Lilian G. Katz, that offers ERIC Digests on mixed-age grouping, a compendium of about 100 research summaries, and a biannual MAGnet newsletter on mixed-age grouping.

International Registry of Nongraded Schools (P.O. Box 271669, Tampa, FL 33688-1699, 813-963-3899), a membership organization, directed by Robert Anderson, that facilitates communication and research on multiage education.

National Alliance of Multiage Educators (P.O. Box 577, Peterborough, NH 03458; 1-800-924-9621), an organization, directed by Jim Grant and Irv Richardson, that provides a newsletter, books and audiovisual materials on multiage education. Jim Grant also directs the Society for Developmental Education (800-924-9621), which provides staff development training through seminars, as well as through a national multiage conference each summer.

and multiage programs
- gain a historical perspective on multiage classrooms
- attend classes, workshops and inservice programs on multiage philosophy
- visit multiage classrooms, interview teachers and students.

3. Obtain administrative and parental support.
Once you have gathered facts, figures and collegial support, you are ready to meet with administrators, site-councils and parents. At this point, the multiage interest group should present its findings on budget considerations, school population demographics and staffing needs. At this meeting, select user-friendly materials that give clear pictures of mixed-aged groupings. Also, provide time for discussion, in a non-threatening atmosphere, about questions and concerns related to the proposed change.

4. Develop a time line.
At this point parents, teachers and administrators should develop a realistic time line for establishing multiage classrooms, which includes:

- teacher commitment
- continued research, dialogue and visits to multiage classes
- a school-wide informational meeting for parents, faculty, area specialists and the community
- registration of interested families
- organization of children into classroom units, while

Multiage Resources

- *The Nongraded Primary: Making Schools Fit Children*, by Rodney Davis, a 28-page booklet published by AASA, Stock No. 21-00192, $6.00, including postage, from AASA Member/Customer Information Center, 1801 N. Moore St., Arlington, VA 22209; 703-875-0748.

- *Creating the Multiage Classroom*, by Sandra J. Stone, GoodYear Books/ScottForesman/HarperCollins/AddisonWesley Longman, $15.95, 1996; 1-800-358-4566.

- *A Common Sense Guide to Multiage Practices*, by Jim Grant and Bob Johnson, Crystal Springs Books, Peterborough, NH; 1-800-321-0401.

- *Children at the Center: Implementing the Multiage Classroom*, by Bruce A. Miller, ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, Eugene, OR; 1-800-438-8841.

- *Full Circle: A New Look at Multiage Education*, by Jane Doan and Penny Chase, Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH; 603-431-7894.

- *Nongradedness: Helping It To Happen*, by Robert H. Anderson and Barbara Nelson Pavan, Technomic Publishing Co., Lancaster, PA; 1-800-233-9936.

- "Making the Transition from Graded to Nongraded Primary Education," by Joan Gaustad, *Oregon School Study Council Bulletin*, April 1992, OSSC, Eugene, OR; 1-800-438-8841.

- "Nongraded Education: Overcoming Obstacles to Implementing the Multiage Classroom," by Joan Gaustad, *Oregon School Study Council Bulletin*, November/December 1994, OSSC, Eugene, OR; 1-800-438-8841.

- *The Case for Mixed-Age Grouping in Early Education*, by Lilian G. Katz, Demetra Evangelou and Jeanette Allison Hartman, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); order #333, $6.00; 1-800-424-2460.

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allowing parents, teachers and administrators to choose between multiage and traditional classrooms.

We believe that the four preceding steps will help establish a strong foundation for a successful multiage program.

Recently, when a group of parents in our district was asked what the ideal school for their children would look like, they described a one-room school house. The parents reported that consistency and continuity were necessary for their children. The parents' comments reflected a consensus. They wanted their children to have:

- the same teacher over two or more years
- a sense of community, with family involvement
- a safe and nurturing environment
- a continuous, non-repetitive curriculum.

We realize that the multiage classroom is not a new concept. It has been around since the 1800s, when children of various ages were in the same classroom with the same teacher for many years. Based on what we know about how children learn, a multiage experience is a credible option for children because:

- children learn in different ways, at different times and from each other
- children learn best through interactive, meaningful and hands-on experiences
- children are naturally curious and competent
- multiage environments encourage children to make choices in an accepting environment
- multiage classrooms allow all children to be successful
- multiage classrooms emphasize the learning process, rather than the product.

On our own elementary campus, we have observed with excitement the number of multiage classrooms expand from three in 1990 to 12 in 1996. Students, teachers and parents have benefited from a learning environment that promotes self-esteem, responsibility and cooperation. To quote a third-year multiage student, "Can we do this for always?"

Facts & Figures

During the 1997-98 school year, students were enrolled in . This is an increase of over the previous year.

The enrollment growth this year occurred in schools, which added new .

This year new schools were up from a total of last year. A total of newly schools were opened and schools were operating on a schedule.

The above statistics were provided by Market Data Retrieval, headquartered in Shelton, Connecticut.

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From the Exec... surfing the web

I hope that all of you will take a moment to visit us at **http://www.udel.edu/bateman/acei**. Last month, we revised our home page to include the most up-to-date information about ACEI and the benefits that members gain through their involvement in the Association.

ACEI's Web site is divided into 11 major sections. ***History & Purpose*** provides a general introduction to the mission and organization of ACEI, its purposes and goals, and information about ACEI Archives housed at the University of Maryland. There is a direct link to the Archives and Historical Manuscripts Department at the University.

Who's Who in ACEI lists all members of the Executive Board and ACEI Committee Chairs—

with direct E-mail links to these people. This section also shows ACEI/United Nations representatives.

You can learn all about the many benefits of belonging to ACEI by visiting the ***Membership*** section. Included is a list of ACEI Branches and Branch Presidents (with E-mail and Internet links), information on how to start an ACEI Branch, customer services, and a membership application that can be printed and mailed to ACEI. This section also provides information about ACEI's Pen-Pal and Member-Get-a-Member Programs.

Another very useful reference section is ***Committees***, which lists 16 committees. Basic information about each committee is given. Committee Volunteer Forms are available from ACEI Headquarters.

Professional Journals and Newsletters highlights ACEI's two award-winning professional journals, *Childhood Education* and the *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*. Publishing opportunities and submission guidelines for books, manuscripts, articles and brochures can be found here. Finally, in this section you can access subscription information for journals and ACEI's *Professional Focus Newsletters*.

Education Resources is the area to check for news about ACEI publications, reprints, audio and video tapes, out-of-print titles, and the joint publishers bookshelf. Also included in this section is a complete list of ACEI Position Papers.

Conference keeps you informed about the Annual International Conference & Exhibition, ACEI World Conferences, local Branch meetings and ACEI-sponsored workshops. In addition, look for information about the Hall of Excellence, Call for Presenters, Video Fair and exhibits.

ACEI & NCATE is designed to help you learn more about ACEI's role as a constituent member of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. See information about folio reviewer training, institution orientation for colleges and universities seeking national accreditation in elementary education, and curriculum folio guidelines.

Two sections provide information about ACEI's ***Speakers' Bureau*** and ***Contributions***. The latter describes seven special funds to which those who support ACEI's mission can donate money.

The final section, ***Roll Book***, is where those who visit our Home Page can submit comments or request additional information. In the past five months, nearly 7,000 people have used this valuable resource.

Over time, we expect ACEI's Web site to grow and become even more useful. Your feedback is important. If you have any suggestions for improvements, or if you think something should be added to the site, please send your comments to ACEI Headquarters. Thank you. We would appreciate hearing from you.

—Jerry Odland, Executive Director

Call for Manuscripts

The readership of *Focus on Elementary* is encouraged to submit ideas and manuscripts related to the education and development of children ages 7 to 10. Editorial assistance is available if needed.

If you have any materials or suggestions to be considered, please contact either Patricia Crawford, University of Central Florida, Box 2811, Daytona Beach, FL 32120 or Kathleen P. Glascott, 1603 Maymont Drive, Murfreesboro, TN 37130.

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ACEI

Summer 1998 • Vol. 10, No. 4

Focus on Elementary ages 7-10

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community

Theme

Editors' note:
In the last issue of *Focus on Elementary*, we explored the potential of multiage grouping. In this issue, we continue to look at alternative configurations for structuring elementary schools and classrooms. First, Kathleen Glascott investigates the many issues that surround inclusive classrooms. Then, Kathy Coughlin provides an overview of looping structures in elementary schools. In our next issue, we will conclude this series with a look at the possibilities offered by cross-age grouping strategies.

Are You Receiving the Right Focus Newsletter?
In addition to *Focus on Elementary*, ACEI offers the following professional focus newsletters:

Focus on Infants & Toddlers
(ages 0-3)
Focus on Pre K & K
(ages 4-6)
Focus on Middle School
(ages 11-13)

If you would like to switch your subscription to one of these, or receive one of these in addition to *Focus on Elementary*, please call the Membership Department at 1-800-423-3563.

Finally, Heterogeneous Learning

Kathleen P. Glascott, Associate Professor,
Middle Tennessee State University,
Murfreesboro, TN

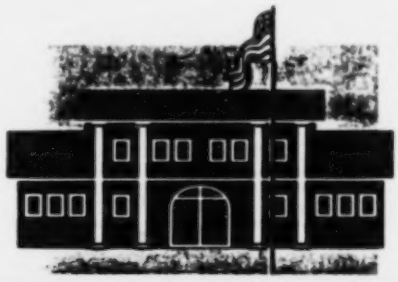
The 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 1997) mandates access to public schools for children with disabilities, but general educators continue to question the act's effectiveness. This discussion addresses the concerns of regular educators and provides support for true heterogeneous learning communities (Villa, Jacqueline, Meyers & Nevin, 1996).

Introduction

Several professional organizations have issued position statements to support inclusion (see Appendix A) (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, Slusher & Saumell, 1996). Classroom teachers, however, may still express discomfort about the practice. Despite public law or school district policy, it will be the general educator, as primary service-deliverer, who will ultimately interpret and implement programs. In other words, regardless of the goals set forth by a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP), it will be the classroom teacher's attitude that determines the success of inclusion programs.

Difficulties

According to Vaughn et al. (1996), teachers most frequently indicate class size as an influence on the inclusion process. Resources (in particular, additional personnel) are also identified as contributing to effective



inclusion. In addition, teachers believe that the administration needs to be aware of their concerns when establishing inclusion programs (Vaughn et al., 1996). School districts that say they support inclusion may not provide adequate facilities and personnel to ensure integrated settings.

Finally, teachers are rightfully concerned about overall funding, and how it may affect their accountability (Vaughn et al., 1996). Because of inclusion, special education classes may not exist. Therefore, students with disabilities may not be receiving needed services (Voyles, 1996).

Wood (1998) suggests that each new role demanded by inclusion programs causes additional stress on both regular and special educators. Classroom teachers express concern that their philosophical orientation, instructional considerations and personalities may differ from those of special educators. Collaboration between special and general educators, however, may provide an effective inclusion model (Vaughn et al., 1996). Successful inclusion will require the combined efforts of regular and special education teachers (Graden & Bauer, 1992; Hanson & Widerstrom, 1993; Pugach, 1995).

Partnership

According to Villa & Thousand (1992), a collaborative teaching model allows regular and special education to merge their unique skills, foster feelings of positive interdependence, develop creative problem-solving skills and share accountability. A partnership model may lessen general educators' concerns. Interestingly, teachers may come to perceive their weakness as a strength. Classroom teachers are concerned that they are not trained in the skills necessary to address special populations. Partnerships may use and expand teachers' skills in different ways. Collaboration presumes that teachers believe all children can learn and assumes that, as educators, they have something to contribute to the learning process.

By definition, collaborative efforts imply a sharing of expectations, responsibilities and effort. Children's progress should be a shared issue of pride, not an issue of turf. In an instance where the general and special educator do not communicate, the child will lose. Neither the special nor the classroom teacher possesses all the knowledge and strategies essential to negotiate a single child. Only when both disciplines appreciate the child as a whole will inclusion be effective.

Collaboration presumes that teachers believe all children can learn and assumes that, as educators, they have something to contribute to the learning process.

Benefits

Through inclusion, children with disabilities are able to not only increase their academic learning, but also develop social skills (Voyles, 1996). Regardless of diplomas or special training, students with disabilities need to be competent in communication, negotiation and cooperation with their nondisabled peers. Social skills training is best rehearsed in a natural setting, the classroom.

It is not only the disabled students who profit from inclusion. If you believe the world is heterogeneous, that is, composed of different people, then inclusionary settings make perfect human sense. Expect, accept, accommodate: if we expect difference, our disposition to accept is enhanced, and thereby our ability to accommodate will be heightened (ASU EC conference, 1995).

Nondisabled students gain in real-life interactions with their

peers with disabilities. Through conversation, play and shared projects, their ability to empathize and communicate are enhanced. Unfortunately, while general educators most frequently identify communication among teachers and the use of cooperative learning as necessary for successful inclusion, classroom teachers remain doubtful about the effects of placing students with and without disabilities together (Vaughn et al., 1996). Teachers' perceptions regarding their roles and their expectations of learners remain critical to inclusion outcomes. Ideally, developmentally appropriate practice will design IEPs for learners both with and without disabilities. Evaluation is on a continuum. Students with disabilities do learn. For some, whether or not their learning is deemed "enough" remains an issue. Advantages to inclusion may lie in how we define schools and learning.

General and special educators are equal partners in the education of all children.

There should be more to schooling than mere academics. Public education should also instill and nurture character, democracy and social consciousness. Only in the heterogeneous school is this possible.

Voices in Partnership

Wood (1998) recommends that the education partners' responsibilities be clearly articulated. Both regular and special education teachers need to be made aware of their partners' assumptions, practices and terminology. Persons who have had successful experiences need to share knowledge. In other words, we need to talk to one another.

Belonging is an important consideration. If teachers do not believe that children with disabilities belong in the school community, then the students will not be included, regardless of legal mandates. Inclusion does not ensure "includedness."

General and special educators are equal partners in the education of all children. Decision-making should be expanded to include teachers, students and community (Villa, Jacqueline, Meyers & Nevin, 1996). When the school community takes ownership of the inclusion intervention, it will happen more naturally. Only when special and general educators perceive schools as truly heterogeneous will partnerships be realized and learning for all children occur.

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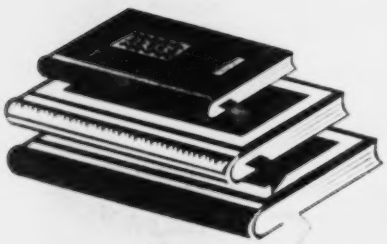
Appendix



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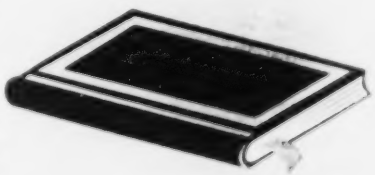
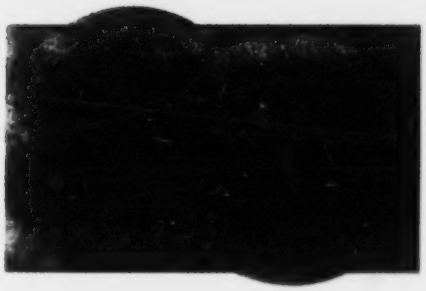


Taken from Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., Jallad, B., Slusher, J., & Saumell, L. (1996). Teacher's view of inclusion. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 11*(2), 96-106.

Get into the Loop with Looping

Kathy D. Coughlin,
Elementary Teacher,
Hamburg Area School District,
Hamburg, PA



Whether we call it student-teacher progression, multi-year grouping or looping, the phenomenon of students and teachers remaining together for two or more years is a procedure that complements mixed-age teaching and learning. Looping was advocated by the early 20th-century Austrian educator Rudolf Steiner, and has been used successfully for years in Germany, where, in some schools, teachers and students stay together for six years (Shiney, 1997).

In the United States, it is more common for students and teachers to stay together for two or three years. Although looping can be used in any grade, it seems to be most beneficial in the early primary grades. By staying with the same children for two or more years, teachers get to know their students better, and disruption is minimized for the students. This practice allows classroom teachers to provide the continuity so often lacking in our disjointed world. The teacher and children get to know each other very well, with the teacher becoming the closest link to the parents. When problems arise, the strong child/teacher/parent bond helps all involved work through things more efficiently.

All it really takes to begin looping is two teachers willing to implement the concept and an understanding and supportive administrator.

Easy To Implement

Looping allows stakeholders (children, parents, teachers and administrators) to accept change with only a minimum of fear, anxiety and frustration. With a comfortable home-school relationship in place, parents feel more at ease and are more likely to keep the lines of communication open with the school. All it really takes to begin looping is two teachers willing to implement the concept and an understanding and supportive administrator. Looping does not require a new building or even alterations in physical space, and most teachers do not need retraining to begin looping. Many teachers already have the skills necessary to succeed in a looping classroom.

Benefits of Looping

When talking about the benefits of looping most teachers mention time as a factor. Since time normally spent getting acquainted is eliminated at the begining of the second year, it is almost like having an extra month of learning. Another month is built into the end of the first year, because students so often end the year on a high note. If teachers know from the beginning that they will have students for two or three years, they can look

at the entire curriculum and integrate subjects instead of repeating them. Teachers report that they are able to learn more about children's intellectual strengths and weaknesses, and that they are more able to tailor the curriculum to individual students' needs. Other reported benefits include reduced disciplinary problems, better attendance, fewer cases of special-needs referrals and grade retention, increased student self-confidence, students' reduced apprehension about the new school year and the new teacher, greater support for children who look to school as a stabilizing influence in their lives, and parents who feel more relaxed and are more involved in their child's education (Blair, 1997).

The "Down" Side of Looping

Looping does not work for every child or every class. Personality clashes between teachers and pupils, or among individual students or groups of students, could be harmful. There are some devastating effects if children get a poor teacher for more than a year. Also, some groups of children are particularly difficult, making for a very trying year. In such cases, all involved might benefit from a chance to regroup the following year. There is also the occasional problem of the difficult parent who can be tolerated for only one year. Schools need to anticipate and plan for social interventions that might be needed and make a commitment to be supportive of individual children and teachers as they adapt to the social environment.

"I liked the 'coming home' feel of the classroom."

In Their Own Words . . .

Making a change that works tends to boost teachers' confidence, and encourages ongoing collaboration and mutual support among teachers. According to one teacher who looped between 1st and 2nd grade, "September is a dream month when you keep your kids. You don't lose as much time getting to know one another and you can truly start them where they are. I liked the 'coming home' feel of the classroom. If I was given the opportunity I would say 'yes' every time!"

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Resources

Web sites for educators

www.usc.edu/go/seagrant

The University of Southern California's El Niño Web page is designed to help teachers "catch the wave" of interest in El Niño. The site offers links to other Web sites that provide up-to-the-minute data on ocean surface temperatures and levels and other primary scientific information. In addition, the site provides information from a recent online workshop that was sponsored by the USC Sea Grant.

www.Legacy98.org

The National Women's History Project has established this Web site for the 150th anniversary of the Women's Rights Movement. The site features an extensive chronology of important events in the Women's Rights Movement, as well as a state-indexed list of celebration programs. Also included are program and activity ideas for schools, celebration materials, curriculum ideas and links to other sites.

www.csnp.ohio-state.edu/glarrc.htm

This Web site from the Great Lakes Area Regional Resource Center provides a searchable online database of resources pertaining to the early prevention of violence. This site is motivated by research showing that the most cost-effective and successful intervention strategy is prevention. Those without Internet access can request a search of the database by calling Carol Daniels at 614-447-0844, ext. 110.

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projects construct learning

It is spring, a time when middle school students are really ready to move out of their seats and into more relaxed, cooperative learning atmospheres. What better time to begin some detailed projects? Group projects can bring together all areas of the curriculum in the pursuit of a special topic, and they are ideal for giving students of varying interests and maturity levels the opportunity to participate fully at levels that are comfortable and appropriate for them.

The choice of topics and the extent of the project need only be governed by individual students' interests and maturity. Work connected with projects not only makes for personal commitment, but also provides practice in developing research skills. When students work in teams, they can more effectively find sources in the library and on the Internet, look things up in reference books, and pull together information in organized ways. They become aware of the processes involved in information gathering and become ever more independent in their learning.

In April, my students started a study project on the seven ancient wonders of the world. Working in teams of three or four, they researched the contributions of the people of that time, learned about the geography of the different regions, and put together a data retrieval book. Then, they began to construct three-dimensional models of the six lost wonders of the world, placing historical descriptions on placards for later display.

As a classroom teacher, I hope to accomplish the following:

- give students an appreciation for the size, design and craftsmanship of these architectural wonders
- encourage and support students as they research and locate sketches showing the likenesses of these structures
- create a manageable system for obtaining and sharing appropriate books, materials and media that apply to these ancient wonders
- share these hands-on creations with other classes in the school and with nearby schools
- display these structures, and information about them, in public places around Minneapolis
- teach students about budgeting money, keeping good records and working together as a team.

This project accords with our district's grade-level expectations for students ages 9-14, and fits into the Minnesota Profile of Learning by integrating the disciplines of English language arts, math, fine arts and social studies. It also builds on our school theme, "Kids Under Construction," since our building is currently undergoing a huge renovation. Each team will be given approximately $40 to spend on materials to construct their ancient wonder in a one meter by one meter by one foot plastic box. With an Imagination Grant, made possible from the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* and Cowles Media, along with the Minneapolis Public Schools and Minnesota Arts Education Partnership Program (MAEP), this project will become a reality for all of us to enjoy.

History gives us a perspective on modern times. By studying past eras and completing history projects such as the one described, we see parallels to our own experiences, including the harsh realities as well as testaments to the amazing ingenuity of the human mind. Please write to me about successful projects that you have tried in your classroom, and I will develop a column related to this sharing. You can send me an E-mail message about your project at: savaiano@lnformns.k12.mn.us.

—M. J. Savaiano, Vice President, Later Childhood/Early Adolescence

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